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# The Military Worth Of Quemoy

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From our history we have professional military men who are more unhappy and more doubtful about the idea of war than in the current days over two little groups of islands off the coast of mainland China. The Joint Chiefs of Staff are agreed that the Quemoy and Matsu groups, the first within the harbor of Amoy and the second off the mouth of the Min River, on which is the port of Foochow, are of negligible or of no importance, in a strictly military sense, to the defense of Formosa.

Formosa (Taiwan), more than one hundred miles distant from the mainland, is easily and fully defensible until such time—perhaps a decade hence—when the Communist Chinese have acquired a stock of nuclear weapons and a substantial naval force to cope with the U.S. Navy. Since the Red Chinese have no such naval force now, the military planners are unable to follow the President's reasoning, as expressed in his report to the American people on September 11: "It is as certain as can be that the shooting which the Communists started on August 23 had as its purpose not just taking the island of Quemoy. It is part of what is indeed an ambitious plan of armed conquest. This plan would liquidate all of the free world positions in the Western Pacific area and bring them under captive governments which would be hostile to the United States and the free world. Thus the Chinese and Russian Communists would come to dominate at least the western half of the now friendly Pacific Ocean."

## Without a Navy

How can this attack be launched if the mainland Chinese have no fleet with which to reach Formosa, Japan, or the Philippines? As military men see the situation, mainland China is utterly powerless as an offensive

naval power and cannot threaten any island nations of the western Pacific with invasion. Furthermore, as far as is known, it has no atomic weapons for either blackmail or destructive purposes—though this situation is expected to change soon and may have changed already.

**B**UT AS a land power the mainland Chinese have the second largest army in the world and the third largest air force, composed entirely of interceptor, tactical support, and light bomber aircraft. The consequences of war with China would not be the loss of Formosa, Japan, and the Philippines, but more likely, as the military planners see it, renewed attacks on the U.S. allies of South Korea and South Vietnam and assaults on Laos, Cambodia, Thailand, and possibly Burma. By carrying on the war against our allies on the Asian mainland, the Chinese with their huge army would have the United States at a great disadvantage, considering the comparatively small size of our army and the great distances over which it must be transported. Indeed, the United States is as unequal to the Chinese on land in Asia as China is unequal to the United States on the ocean—assuming, of course, that war between the two powers would be fought with conventional weapons.

If the United States should use nuclear weapons to protect the offshore islands from invasion, the Soviet Union would be forced to give its foremost ally atomic weapons with which to fight back. The Soviet Union now equals the United States in the production of fissionable material. Its stock of weapons, however, is probably not more than a third of ours—large enough, of course, to supply the Chinese with enough atomic bombs to destroy everything of military consequence on Formosa and to chase the Sev-

enth Fleet out of range of the Soviet IL-28 jet bombers with which the Chinese Air Force is equipped. U.S. air power in the western Pacific is not sufficient to prevent such a sequence of events. But the Strategic Air Command can, in return, destroy the ports, communications, and industry of much of China.

This is the real concern of our military planners in the event of war with China, not the destruction of our allies in the western Pacific. They do not like what they see. They would support a necessary war, regardless of the outlook, but they have little stomach for a war over an issue of little consequence fought, as they believe, to get our diplomats out of a trap of their own devising.

## What Can the Reason Be?

To the military, the whole position we are in is so incredible that they are groping for some hidden reason that might give it some sense. They wonder if this is not just some more of the Secretary of State's brinkmanship, and hope that neither he nor the President means what they seem to say. They fear the worst: that the Nationalist regime in Formosa is threatened by subversion, and that Mr. Dulles's great show in response to the threatened attack on Quemoy is for the purpose of bolstering the Nationalist government.

It is generally believed that war may be avoided, but it is feared that all three of the big powers involved—the United States, the Soviet Union, and the People's Republic of China—may be taking such rigid positions that they may be unable to draw back and that a war might follow that no one wanted, a war that easily could involve the Soviet Union actively and would be certain to involve it in material support of China, a war in which the United States will be without allies, except such of them as are attacked by Communist China.

IN A NUMBER of ways the Formosa situation has become more rather than less confused since Congress voted the Formosa Resolution in January, 1955.

The legal status of Formosa is completely different from that of